

Burlington Friends Meeting Handbook

Welcome to Burlington Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends..... where a living tradition of Quaker worship continues to grow. We celebrated joyfully our 50th anniversary in Burlington in 2009.

Meeting for Worship is held every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. and on Wednesdays. From mid-September through mid-June, on the first and third Sundays of the month, there is a First Day School class for school-age children and child care for younger children during worship. Children join the adults for 15 minutes during worship.

Meeting for Worship begins when Friends gather and sit in silence together as Quakers have done for more than 350 years. In this silence we renew our shared belief in the possibility of direct individual and corporate communication with God. We make a purposeful attempt to move away from the distractions of our daily lives and our preoccupation with ourselves. With practice, we learn to instead focus on the Inner Light, which is that spirit of Christ which we believe dwells in everyone.

The silence is at times broken by vocal ministry. Such ministry is not planned and anyone present may be moved to rise and speak. Ministry may be offered in the form of a prayer, song or verbal message expressing hope, thanksgiving, or the challenge of a pressing concern. Friends find it important to allow a period of silence between messages. We are cautioned against long discourse, discussion or debate.

Vocal ministry focuses and deepens the silent worship that follows. In this creative and reverent silence, we open our hearts to God and strengthen our bonds to each other. Often, we find peace of mind and a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

Meeting for Worship lasts about an hour and ends when those appointed shake hands in token of conclusion. There is a brief period of joys and concerns, introductions, and announcements, followed by hospitality. All are welcome!

Our **Monthly Meeting for Business** is held on the second Sunday of the month after worship and hospitality. Committees bring their concerns and proposals for consideration by the group. Decisions are made by seeking a “sense of the meeting.” No votes are taken. If there is not general agreement on a particular issue, the matter is held over until there is a resolution that is acceptable to the entire group. In certain circumstances, a member who strongly disagrees with a decision of the meeting may ask to “stand aside” because they recognize the “sense of the meeting” and do not wish to oppose it, or may ask to be recorded by name in the minutes as opposing the decision.

Beyond Meeting for Worship: the ongoing work of the Meeting

Burlington Meeting has no paid staff. The work of the Meeting is shared by members and attenders. The following represents the list of offices and committees serving the

meeting community. Term of service for all offices and committees is three years unless otherwise indicated. An individual's term may be extended based on the Meeting's needs, recommendation by the Gifts and Services Committee and approval by the Meeting.

The **Presiding Clerk** is responsible for maintaining an overview of the life of the Meeting. She or he arranges the agenda and clerks (or presides at) the monthly meeting for business, while keeping track of the schedule of tasks for the business meeting to take care of during the year. The clerk also signs official meeting documents, consults with clerks of the Meeting committees, and maintains links between the Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), and other Quaker and community groups.

The **Recording Clerk** writes and keeps minutes. The **Corresponding Clerk** assists the Presiding Clerk with receiving, transmitting, and acknowledging correspondence. The **Recording Clerk** keeps permanent records of changes in the status of members, such as births, death, marriages, membership applications, transfers, and withdrawals. The **Treasurer** keeps accounts, receives and disburses fund, and makes financial reports to the Meeting.

Committees

Ministry & Counsel oversees and nurtures the spiritual and pastoral life of the Meeting community. It is composed of two sub-committees: Ministry and Worship and Pastoral Care. The two sub-committees currently meet together monthly as Ministry and Counsel.

- The **Ministry and Worship Committee** oversees the worship and spiritual life of the Meeting, seeking to support and nurture God's will in our lives. This committee has oversight of Meetings for Worship, regularly held on Sunday morning and Wednesday noon, and plans for religious education of adults. It prepares the annual State of Society Report and has oversight of Shelburne Allowed Meeting. It appoints **clearness and oversight committees** for marriage, membership, and other matters requiring Friends to reach clearness for themselves and the community. Ministry and Worship oversees the work of **adult religious education** through planning and implementation of regular Sunday morning curriculum and special workshops for adults.
- The **Pastoral Care Committee** provides for supportive care of all members and attenders. Care includes providing transportation, meals, and visits to the sick and hospitalized, and memorial meetings. Pastoral Care also coordinates the provision of hospitality for Sunday Meeting for Worship and helps to arrange activities or workshops on topics of member interest. **Standing support committees** are appointed by the Pastoral Care Committee to provide ongoing encouragement and a sounding board for individuals who are engaged in work, either within the Meeting or in the larger community. **Temporary support**

committees are convened for a shorter time to help a person who faces a particularly difficult life situation.

The **Children's Religious Education Committee** is responsible for planning and implementing an educational program for the Meeting's children and youth. This committee plans the curriculum and involves other adults as appropriate to work with the children.

The **Communications Committee** plans and coordinates communication inside and outside the Meeting. This committee maintains a website <www.burlingtonquakers.org>, produces a newsletter, coordinates an e-mail listserv, maintains the database of members, publishes a directory of members and attenders (including names of current clerks and committee members), and manages the flow of printed information in the Meetinghouse.

The **Library Committee** develops and maintains the collection of books and other media owned by the Meeting and manages a system for tracking the lending and return of books.

The **Peace, Justice & Earthcare Committee** serves Burlington Friends Meeting by interfacing between members and the larger community on the issues of peace, nonviolence, equality, and right-living. It strives to cultivate a deeper awareness of our connections with all of creation.

The **Property Committee** oversees the use and maintenance of the Meeting House, the Bassett House, and the grounds.

The **Finance Committee** works to ensure the fiscal soundness of the Meeting through work on the annual budget, appeals for donations, and applications for grants and loans.

The **Naming Committee** is convened annually to bring forth a slate of nominees to serve on the Gifts & Service Committee.

The **Gifts & Service Committee** recommends members and attenders to fill the positions and committees that serve Burlington Monthly Meeting. Through interviews with Meeting participants, the committee discovers the gifts individuals have to offer and how they wish to serve the Meeting.

Beyond Burlington Friends Meeting...

We are affiliated with other Quaker meetings in the Northeast through:

***New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM)**. 901 Pleasant St., Worcester, MA 01602-1908. Tel: 508-754-6760; FAX: 508-754-9401; email: neym@neym.org; web: www.neym.org. NEYM has annual sessions in August.

***Northwest Quarterly Meeting (NWQM)** is one of eight quarterly Meetings in New England Yearly Meeting. It has eleven Monthly Meetings (seven in Vermont and two in southwestern New Hampshire and seven worship groups). NWQM meets during the first weekend of Dec. and March at one of the Monthly Meetings. Farm & Wilderness Camp in Plymouth, VT is the site of NWQM's June and September weekend gatherings.

We are connected to the following Friends organizations:

***Friends General Conference (FGC)**, 1216 Arch St. 2-B, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Tel: 215-561-1700; email: friends@fgcquaker.org; web: www.fgcquaker.org.

Friends United Meeting (FUM), 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374. Tel: 765-962-7573; email: info@fum.org; web: www.fum.org.

***Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)**, World Office, 4 Byng Pl., London WC1E 7JH, England. Email: world@fwcc.quaker.org; web: www.quaker.org/fwcc.

***American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)**, National Office, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. Tel: 215-241-7000; email: afscinfo@afsc.org; web: www.afsc.org.

***Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)**, 245 Second St. NE, Washington, DC 20002. Tel: 202-547-6000; email: fcnl@fcnl.org; web: www.fcnl.org.

***Quaker Earthcare Witness**, 173-B N. Prospect Street, Burlington, VT 05401. Tel: 802-658-0308; email: info@quakerearthcare.org; web: www.quakerearthcare.org.

**The meeting appoints representatives to these Friends organizations as well as to the following local faith based groups: the Joint Urban Ministry Program (JUMP), Greater Burlington Ministerial Association, and Vermont Interfaith Power and Light.*

For more information on Quakerism:

FAITH AND PRACTICE of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1985. This book communicates to members and inquirers the historic and continuing faith of Friends and to outline procedures to be followed by meetings regarding membership, organization, the conduct of their affairs, and the concerns of the Society. *Faith and Practice* can be found in the Burlington Monthly Meeting library, along with other key texts referenced within.

www.quaker.org

Friends Journal, 1216 Arch Street 2A, Philadelphia, PA 19107-2835. Tel: 215-563-8629.
Web: www.friendsjournal.org; email: info@friendsjournal.org.

Quaker Life, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374-1980. Tel: 765-962-7573.
Web: www.fum.org/QL; email: quakerlife@fum.org.

Quaker Books of Friends General Conference, 1216 Arch St., 2B, Philadelphia, PA 19107—web: www.quakerbooks.org; Tel.: 800/966-4556